



# Charting A Direction

Charting a direction for care, ministry and outreach in the midst of COVID-19 for The Journey Church. *A Strategic Discussion Document*

## INTRODUCTION

In one way we are at a loss for words in framing all the possible implications the COVID-19 pandemic has had and is having on our lives, families, schools, business all over the world.

Included in this is our local church. We are out on this churning sea of uncertainty as we seek to navigate the near and distant future. In times like these, trusting God to strengthen and guide us is a truth we anchor ourselves too. We need a faith that asks, “Lord what would you have us “be” and “do”? How are we to be lights in this world that offer your hope and love? How do we encourage one another and build each other up? How do we walk by faith in moments like these? How are we to be the church?”

The following framework is presented as a possible path in the days to come. *(My thanks to Kevin Vincent, Associate Director of CBAC, who provided a document entitled - “Re-Opening Church Wisely and Re-Imagining Forward” that helped inform this discussion document)*

Please remember this is a discussion paper. As the Lead Pastor the following is my initial thinking regarding our direction as a local church. My heart’s desire is that we love and lead well. We do that by providing:

- care for our faith community,
- clarity in the midst of the uncertainty of COVID-19
- a willingness to chart a direction and take it one step at a time.

## KEY UNDERSTANDINGS

#1 - Pro-Active, Safe, Wise and Flexible

These words should describe whatever plans and strategies we follow through on. These words are rooted in our desire to “love our neighbor”

- **Proactive.** We must determine clear steps for our congregation(s). We need a common agreed-upon direction.
- **Safe.** The virus is highly contagious and deadly. A second wave is not out of the question. We must consider how we safely implement all parts of our strategy so that we do not put people at unnecessary risk.
- **Wise.** We want to wisely steward our people, money, and other resources God has provided.
- **Flexible.** Things change rapidly. Regulations can shift daily. We must build into our plan lots of space for contingency and plans B & C & D.

## #2 - **Slower is better. Rushing is risky.**

While people are longing for community, they are not necessarily desiring large gatherings and are somewhat fearful. Much of that fear will continue at least until **a vaccine is found**. A number of pastors have communicated that perhaps a good rule of thumb is to “*stay one step behind the government and our neighborhoods.*” We want to be fully honoring and respectful of authority on the one hand, and on the other hand, not take the risk of being that gathering that is responsible for spreading the virus. This is particularly true for Older Adults. Older Adults will (*and should*) be slower to return to volunteering and larger gatherings. How will this affect our re-opening strategy?

## #3 - **The Practice of New Protocols**

Fostering a deep sense of safety and having protocols in place to build that security will be essential.

Following is a sample list (not exhaustive), provided by Kevin Vincent, an Associate Director of CBAC of questions we will need to consider.

“Churches that begin to gather for worship as groups of 40 - 50+ in their auditorium will need to consider people from the time they ENTER the parking lot until they LEAVE the parking lot:

- Does our parking lot need to change?
- Do we need multiple gatherings to accommodate our congregation and maintain physical distancing? How many gatherings?
- Do people need to sign up for a particular “worship slot”?
- If we have multiple gatherings, do we shorten our services and what are the best service times so that people coming and going aren’t meeting each other?
- How do we sanitize the facility following each gathering?  
Washrooms? Door handles?
- How do we keep people distanced in the auditorium when they gather? If we have chairs what is the configuration? If we have pews what do we do?
- Is it even possible to have a children’s ministry and childcare at this point or do we shape a “family-style” worship gathering?
- How does the worship team model physical distancing?
- Are masks expected?
- Is sanitizer available?
- Is the greeting time gone forever?
- How do we take the offering?
- What is the new standard greeting? Elbow bump?
- What are guidelines for tellers and counting money?
- Do we have communion during this phase? If so, how?
- Perhaps a survey to the congregation asking about their level of anxiety about returning and what could help that? What would help them feel comfortable entering back into worship? Bringing their children back?
- Youth Ministry: When does the youth ministry begin to gather again in-person? What will that look like?

- Board meetings and committee meetings. Do we begin to reconvene these meetings? Is there a need? In fact are we finding that much of the business at this point can be done in a virtual meeting? How long should that continue?
- What types of new training is necessary for volunteers?

The goal here is not to overwhelm but to consider all the implications. And there are a lot of implications.

#### #4 - Acting on New Opportunities

We are being asked to reimagine what it means to be the church. Our pre-COVID 19 **mindset was that everything flows from the large group of real people gathering**. Now we see that large group gatherings may be the last thing on our list. Online worship gatherings, faith@home and small gatherings - call them bubbles, clusters, journey groups or home churches - are the new norm for the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, how can we leverage technology with a robust online presence? How do we use social media, and meeting platforms in effective ways? How do we minister to our neighbors with love and hope? *(We don't want the phrase "stay safe" to become "stay away")*

#### #5 - Take Care of our best resource - Our People

Right now we have had many people step up to manage the sudden shift in the last few months. People in leadership have taken on extra burdens, working harder, and taking initial financial sacrifices. As we move forward the goal is caring for our leadership in this uncertain time with all its demands.

### CHARTING A DIRECTION MAY to AUGUST - 2020

1. Our primary way of gathering for the next number of weeks will be from an **online platform**.
2. We will continue to **communicate** with each other in diverse ways and make use of meeting platforms (ie Zoom) for ministry events.

3. As **guidelines ease** we will look for ways to begin to build up slowly how smaller groups to larger groups may gather.
4. We will seek to creatively plan for **a summer ministry presence with children and youth**. We will seek to maintain proper protocols. We imagine a greater digital footprint. As well reshaping BackYard Bible Clubs where physical distancing is maintained and the settings are large enough.
5. A **Home Church strategy** will be planned in the next number of weeks ready to be implemented in the fall.
6. **Other focus areas** - like family, children, youth, older adults and community care will be re-evaluated and reimagined in how to create impactful engagement of ministry and outreach.
7. We will be operating on a 3-month-at-a-time **emergency budget format** in regards to our financials.